



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

THE REQUIRED RELIGIOUS SERVICES OF A COLLEGE

PRESIDENT GEORGE HARRIS, LL.D.
Amherst College, Amherst, Mass.

The older colleges of this country from the beginning required all students to attend public prayers morning and evening every week-day and church twice on Sunday. Later the requirement was made for morning prayers only and for one service on Sunday. This is now the custom in nearly all colleges and in some universities. State institutions do not require attendance on religious services.

Objection is made by some persons to a requirement respecting religion. They say it is wrong in principle to compel anyone to be present in a place of public worship, while the very fact that attendance is compulsory destroys the religious value of the service. A further objection is made, that the circumstance of college prayers is unfavorable to worship. In the morning the students rush from breakfast to chapel, and, after a few minutes, pass to the lecture-room, where their minds are engaged on secular subjects. These objections will be noticed after the character and advantage of a daily religious service in college have been considered.

I have had opportunity to observe in only one college, but, after several years there, I am convinced that the advantages are very great, and that it would be a distinct loss not to have the college together daily at a religious service. I am aware that conditions are not the same in a university having thousands of students as in a college having hundreds. Yet Yale and Princeton require attendance of undergraduates, and students in those universities favor it.

Whether attendance is required or voluntary, much depends on the character of the service. Those who attend should be participants, not merely listeners. I found the service at Amherst so ordered that the students had but little direct part. There was first a doxology, then a chapter of the Bible read, a hymn, and an extemporaneous prayer; the whole occupying nearly or quite fifteen minutes. There was much inattention, though the students, for the most part,

were quiet. Some, during the Scripture lesson and prayer, were studying their lessons or were reading, and the majority, apparently, were not listening. The service seemed long and tiresome.

The order was changed so that the congregation, instead of listening, should participate. The order is a doxology, responsive reading, a hymn, a short prayer, usually a collect or some familiar prayer ending with the Lord's Prayer; the whole occupying eight or ten minutes. All is done by the congregation, except the short prayer, and that, since the Lord's Prayer follows, is listened to. Participation is more general than it is in the average congregation. While some do not open their books for responsive reading and the hymn, the large majority do, and the active part taken by the students is often remarked by visitors. From time to time an address, in place of some part of the service, is given, not necessarily on a religious subject. Sometimes a few verses of Scripture are read. The president of the college conducts the service, or, in his absence, one of the professors.

A great advantage is familiarity gained with Scripture, hymns, and prayers. Every day a portion of Scripture is read responsively, a hymn is sung, a prayer is spoken, the Lord's Prayer is repeated. Regret is often expressed that educated men are so ignorant of the Bible, and that youth know little or nothing of it. A corrective is the daily service in college. The dignified and reverent diction of the Bible, and of the hymns and prayers of the church, makes for reverence and dignity in the use of them. It is true that there is some listlessness and inattention—and in what congregation is there none?—but repetition gives familiarity and promotes the spirit of reverence.

There are secondary advantages which should not be overlooked. The service brings the whole college together every day. The college of no more than four hundred or five hundred students would rarely be together in one place but for the morning service. Even a whole class of one hundred to one hundred and fifty seldom assembles, since in their studies they are in small divisions. (Daily gymnastic drill, which is required also, brings a class together, and this is one of its advantages.) Coming together, doing things together, singing, reading, praying together, standing as president and professors pass out,

and going out in the order of classes—all this, with the few serious moments of praise and worship, has a wonderfully unifying effect.

After the service, notices are given, college affairs brought up by the students, or class meetings held in the few minutes preceding lectures. Some object to this, but I like it. The college is together in a family meeting, and any interest of the academic family may properly be considered.

It is the fact, now, that the large majority of students are in favor of the daily service and of required attendance. They may not analyze the reasons, but they would be sorry to have it abolished. On this or that morning a student wishes he did not have to go to chapel, yet is strongly in favor of having chapel. Just what it does for a college may not be easily defined; yet one who lives in a college knows that there would be a loss of something valuable if there were no daily service. It is noticeable that graduates, when they are at Amherst, almost invariably go to morning prayers. They like to see the college together and to revive pleasant memories.

Certain objections have been noted. One objection is that it is wrong in principle to require or compel anyone to be present at a religious service; that religion should not be made a matter of compulsion. Well, any student who has conscientious scruples is not required to attend. In the last seven years there has been only one case. That was a young man who told me he was an agnostic, or worse; that he did not believe in prayer, since all things are under law, nor in the freedom of the will, nor in a future life; and that it was painful to him to listen to prayers and hymns which assume those beliefs. He seemed to be, and I think was, sincere, and he was excused from attendance. It is worthy of remark, by the way, that a student who declares himself an agnostic, an infidel, or an atheist is an anomaly. In the early part of the last century college students, not uncommonly, boasted that they were infidels, and took the names of Shelley or Paine. A student who should do that now would be laughed at as a callow youth. Not all are consciously religious, but the majority are, and all respect religion. Furthermore, Catholics and Jews are not required to attend the religious services of the college, yet nearly all of them do attend, regularly or occasionally. In respect to the requirement, no one is obliged

to go to a college that expects attendance on religious services. Everyone comes of his own or his parents' choice. Those who absent themselves and ask frequently to be excused are almost invariably students who are negligent in all things and habitually behind in their studies. The objection that compulsion is inconsistent with religion is a theoretical, not a practical and decisive, objection. It holds only in case of conscientious scruples, and these are respected by making no requirement.

The other objection is trivial—so trivial that it should not, perhaps, even be noticed. It might be called the psychological objection. Students, it is said, rush into chapel, breathless, their minds on the lessons of the next hour, and cannot profit by a religious service wedged in between breakfast and lecture. But students are more leisurely, even in the morning, than the objector supposes. Only a few, probably not a twentieth, come in at the last moment. They come gradually, as any congregation comes, with the difference from the ordinary congregation that they are not straggling in after the service begins. It is a singular notion that the mind cannot be composed for worship just before the activities of the day nor immediately after eating. For the same reason there should not be family prayers nor a blessing at table. Thus, in order to worship, one should do nothing and think nothing for a considerable period of time before and after the act of worship. This is a false conception of worship and of religion. The youthful mind turns easily from one thing which is absorbing to another thing. A very good beginning of every day is some portion of the Bible, a hymn of praise, and a prayer.

Besides the daily morning service there is church on Sunday, where attendance is required. The college pulpit is a throne of power. The best preachers of the country are enlisted by the colleges. Students appreciate highly the opportunity of hearing them, and preachers appreciate the privilege of addressing a company of students. There is no such audience as an audience of several hundred students, and none that good preachers like so well to address. Incidentally, it is good for ministers to preach before a college, to ask themselves what message they shall bring to such a congregation. Students take nothing for granted. Position does not count. They do not even know about that. What counts is the man and

his message of sincerity and reality. Then, how they sing the great hymns and read the psalms, like the voice of many waters!

In general, respecting the requirement of attendance at daily prayers and at church, in my seven years at Amherst I have never heard an objection, except in the one case to which I have referred.

It might be supposed that, with these daily requirements, there would be no place for voluntary religious meetings; that few, if any, would go of a Sunday evening or at any time. On the contrary, the Christian Association is a flourishing institution. There is an average attendance at the meetings of nearly a third of the college; which means, at some meetings, a good many more than a third, overtaking the capacity of the rooms. These meetings are addressed by the preacher of the morning, or by an alumnus of the college, or by a specialist, on a wide range of subjects, religious, ethical, political, and even athletic. Many students give an evening each week to work in boys' clubs in neighboring towns, teach in Sunday schools, and conduct meetings in schools and churches. Bible study, usually on Sunday afternoons, is pursued in groups by as many as a hundred and fifty students. Voluntary attendance at religious meetings and active Christian work flourish as well in a college which requires attendance at religious services as in colleges which make no requirement.

I have attempted to describe the actual conditions in a college that is a compact community situated in a country village. I am sure that other colleges, similarly situated, would give substantially the same account. Whether or not required attendance is advisable under different conditions, as with a college in a city, or with a university, I am not qualified to judge.

Pure religion and undefiled flourishes in our modern academic communities. There is no toleration of pietism, cant, or pretense, but a majority of students are moral, honorable, reverent, and ready for real Christian service.

OPINIONS OF OTHER COLLEGE PRESIDENTS

VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY holds daily college chapel. All students are required to attend, provided they have recitations before or after chapel. I regard the plan of compulsory attendance as a good one, not believing that attendance could otherwise be secured.

JAMES H. KIRKLAND, *President*

NASHVILLE, TENN.

IOWA COLLEGE holds chapel exercises five days in the week, Monday-Friday, at nine o'clock A. M. Students are not required to attend. Attendance on this basis probably ranges from 60 to 75 per cent. of the student body. Probably 75 per cent. of the students are more or less regular in attendance. Compulsory attendance, I think, is good, but I am inclined to think voluntary attendance is better—very much better if essentially the same results in the matter of attendance are secured by it. The reasons for a crowded chapel are well stated by President Harris. But I do not believe that the only method of securing a full chapel is compulsory attendance. Iowa College has tried to cultivate the idea that the chapel service is a privilege, and has succeeded in establishing a tradition that has power enough in it to make voluntary chapel very successful. The service is simple, but genuinely spiritual, and is heartily enjoyed by the students.

On Sunday there is a vesper service at five o'clock. This is also voluntary, but the chapel is usually filled with students.

J. H. T. MAIN, *President*

GRINNELL, IA.

DENISON UNIVERSITY holds daily college chapel; attendance is required. We regard compulsory attendance as desirable for the reason that it more effectively carries out the design of the founders and present supporters of the institution. If chapel exercises are what they should be, students will be willing to attend, but student nature is such that a positive requirement is necessary to keep them methodical. I have never heard of a complaint because of our rule making chapel attendance compulsory, though there are some who would not attend but for the rule.

E. W. HUNT, *President*

By H. R. HUNDLEY

GRANVILLE, O.

OBERLIN COLLEGE holds college chapel five times a week. Attendance is required, but not monitored. In such circumstances as ours I regard the plan of compulsory attendance as a good one, and concur in the reasons presented by President Harris.

HENRY C. KING, *President*

OBERLIN, O.

VASSAR COLLEGE holds college chapel daily at evening and Sunday morning. The latter service is a more elaborate one and includes a sermon by some clergyman from abroad. The students are required to attend. I believe in compulsory attendance at chapel in our conditions, and I may

say for most American colleges. I think it most desirable that a college should give its support through these formative years to the spiritual influences which are so important in the up-building of character. These are not sustained by capricious conduct, but require the support of law. It is not a bad thing in our American life to emphasize law, and its close relation to loyalty can be shown nowhere better than in connection with the chapel life. I believe that the effect on the college is excellent, and if that may not be said possibly of the few, yet here as elsewhere the law for the majority must be the law for the whole. The great mass of the students are interested in the chapel, and enjoy its exercises and profit by them. Much of that influence would be lost if the attendance were not required. This is all in the direction of the formation of good habits. The only protests that I have ever heard against it have been from a theoretical rather than from a practical spirit, which leads so many of our American youth to object to anything that savors of a rule imposed by authority.

The interest in our own chapel is solid and strong, and we have never had to face the question raised by you. I attribute not a little of the strong feeling for it to the evening hour at which it is held.

I cordially indorse all that President Harris says of the secondary influence of chapel in contributing to the *esprit de corps* of college life. It is with us one of the most important contributors to that end.

JAMES M. TAYLOR, *President*

POUGHKEEPSIE, N. Y.

At BROWN UNIVERSITY we hold chapel every morning at nine o'clock, having the first recitation or lecture scheduled for eight o'clock. Attendance is required on the part of all under-graduate students, unless strong reasons can be presented for excuse. Probably 95 per cent. of our undergraduate students regularly attend the exercises.

In the main, I fully indorse the position taken by President Harris. I believe that in colleges or universities of small or moderate size very much is gained socially, academically, intellectually, and religiously from having the great majority of the students required to assemble once a day.

Many centrifugal interests have come into the modern college, such as the elective system, the growth of many different organizations, the multiplication of departments, buildings, teachers, and students. The unifying influence of a common assembly is therefore perhaps more needed today than ever before. But the dominant interest in such an assembly cannot be literary, or scientific, or philosophical, or athletic, since these interests are in themselves sectional and divisive. The dominant interest must be religious—that is *human*.

In my opinion, there should be required attendance at daily chapel service but not at any Sunday service. The Sunday service should be one of worship, pure and simple, and worship cannot be compelled. Any man who has preached to college students would rather address fifty who are present voluntarily than five hundred who are there against their will.

The academic family should be called together every day, but the elaborate function of formal public worship occupying the greater part of the forenoon is not necessary in order to maintain academic solidarity.

W. H. P. FAUNCE, *President*

PROVIDENCE, R. I.

The UNIVERSITY OF WOOSTER holds daily college chapel, which the students are required to attend. I regard the plan of compulsory attendance as a good one, and agree with President Harris' views, both as to his reasons for compulsory attendance and his answers to the objections. My experience covers thirteen years in three colleges. What he says I have found true in them all.

SELBY F. VANCE, *Ex-President*

WOOSTER, O.

NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY holds a daily chapel service, and requires attendance at four services a week. I believe such a requirement wise. A frequent meeting of the college body has a valuable influence in creating and maintaining an institutional or community sense, an appreciation of the college as a body. This is valuable, not only to undergraduates but to graduates, and others as well. In a higher sense it is like the advantage arising from the physical embodiment of the college in buildings. Such a general meeting is an inspiration and an opportunity for inspiration, and is worth while if it had no religious influence. But I am persuaded it does have a religious value and a great one, though often unappreciated at the time.

To make the service effective, attendance must be required; otherwise the service will be poorly attended. In my experience in a denominational college, a state university, and an independent and undenominational school, I have met no objection to a required chapel service. I have not begun my work at Northwestern, and do not know the conditions, but I understand the required service is accepted by the students sympathetically.

A. W. HARRIS, *President*

EVANSTON, ILL.

The UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA holds college chapel thrice a week; students are not required to attend. The average attendance at each

exercise is about one-third of the students; about two-thirds are more or less regular in attendance. I do not approve the plan of compulsory attendance. In the University of Nebraska it would be illegal.

E. BENJAMIN ANDREWS *Chancellor*

LINCOLN, NEB.

At PRINCETON UNIVERSITY we have service every morning in the college chapel, lasting about fifteen minutes or less. Every student in the university is required to attend the services twice each week. No excuses are received, as this requirement is considered so moderate that every student can attend twice at some time during the week. The result of this arrangement has been most gratifying in the following respects: A good attendance is assured every day. The element of compulsion is thus reduced to a minimum. The undergraduates no longer regard the chapel requirement as a burden and as an undue limitation of their liberties, but adapt themselves to it with good spirit and with a pride in the success of the new order of things. Consequently the chapel service is no longer regarded as a merely perfunctory exercise, but has become more truly a form of real worship. The doing away of excuses for chapel absences has been an incalculable advantage.

The requirement for Sunday morning chapel is that every student must attend one-half of the Sunday services each quarter; this also is not exacting in the demand made upon the student.

JOHN GRIER HIBBEN, *Acting President*

PRINCETON, N. J.

At YALE UNIVERSITY required chapel is held only in the academical department. There is also a regular daily service for students in the Divinity School. On week days the academical service is held at ten minutes past eight in the morning, lasting only about twelve minutes. On Sunday there is a service at half past ten, lasting for an hour. Students in the academical department are expected to attend regularly the week-day service. They receive, however, a certain allowance of cuts for the different terms. A few students are excused by the dean for special reasons; and I have known cases where students belonging to the Roman Catholic church have been allowed to attend daily service at one of the Roman Catholic churches instead of at the college chapel. On Sunday a student in the academical department is expected to attend college chapel or some other place of worship approved of by his parents. The great majority of the students choose the chapel. The largest excep-

tion is in the case of the Episcopalians, possibly fifty or a hundred of whom attend other places of worship.

I dislike to have the word "compulsory" used in this discussion. The word "required" or "regular" seems to me better. There are no creeds ever said in the Yale chapel, and the services are all of an entirely undenominational character, the daily prayer services being mostly conducted by laymen of different denominations, and the Sunday services by ministers of all the Protestant denominations, including Unitarians.

On the whole, I am of the opinion that the religious services, as conducted in the college chapel at Yale, are of spiritual value to the student community; and there has been in former years a feeling among the more thoughtful students that the services have very strong advantages. To be sure, the students approve of the services more because of the influence that they have on maintaining the general spirit of unity in the academic world than for distinctly religious reasons; but there is a general feeling among the students of the academical department that college life would be less rich if the services were omitted or made entirely optional.

ANSON PHELPS STOKES, Jr., *Secretary*

NEW HAVEN, CONN.

In the UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN chapel exercises are not held at present, though they were until a few years ago. Attendance was compulsory until the middle of the academic year 1871-72, and afterward voluntary. The services were first suspended partly because the room in which they were held was required for other purposes. Subsequently we held a vesper service in our large hall (seating 2,600), with very attractive music. But the hall was much too large for the purpose, and as we have no suitable room, the services were finally dropped, though not without reluctance on my part and on the part of some of the students. Still, the attendance under the voluntary system was not altogether satisfactory. Singularly enough, it consisted quite as largely of students who made no special profession of a religious life as of those who were church members. The assembling of students, the chance to say a friendly word to each other in coming in or going out, and the brief service, in which they participated, furnished an attraction to a certain number. And the opportunity for me to say a word of warning or appeal on some matter of college life was one which was of value.

We doubted whether in a state institution we had a right to compel attendance.

I suppose the custom of having prayers in the American colleges was

brought from England, when the American college like the English was the home of a family of masters and students, living in one dormitory, eating together there at a common table. It was in fact family prayers in a college home.

But when in an American college there was no common home, the masters and students living in scattered residences, the continuance of college prayers as family prayers was no longer logically necessary. But it was often continued as a pleasant and useful custom, which was properly enough called for by a healthy religious sentiment where circumstances made it practicable.

JAMES B. ANGELL, *President*

ANN ARBOR, MICH.

BOWDOIN COLLEGE has a chapel service every day, which students are required to attend. I think the plan of compulsory attendance is a good one, for substantially the same reasons as those set forth by President Harris.

WM. DEWITT HYDE, *President*

BRUNSWICK, ME.

The UNIVERSITY OF ROCHESTER holds daily college chapel; attendance is prescribed. If the service is of the character outlined by President Harris, the plan of compulsory attendance seems to me a good one. My reasons for regarding such a plan as desirable are to be found in the spiritual suggestion which such a service furnishes; in the familiarity with Scripture, hymns, and prayers which through it the student gains; in the advantage to the college of a gathering of all its members, developing a sense of college unity, and making opportunity for communications to the whole student body. Of these the first is of chief significance; it may give to all the college work an atmosphere of spiritual aspiration and refinement.

RUSH RHEES, *President*

ROCHESTER, N. Y.

In SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY we have chapel service every morning except Sunday. Students are not required to attend, but of those in attendance at periods just before and after chapel a large number are present. The attendance is mostly of those in the buildings at the time or coming to the next hour.

I do not believe in compulsory attendance any more than I believe in it for our churches. All religious exercises should be voluntary to be profitable to the worshiper.

JAMES R. DAY, *Chancellor*

SYRACUSE, N. Y.